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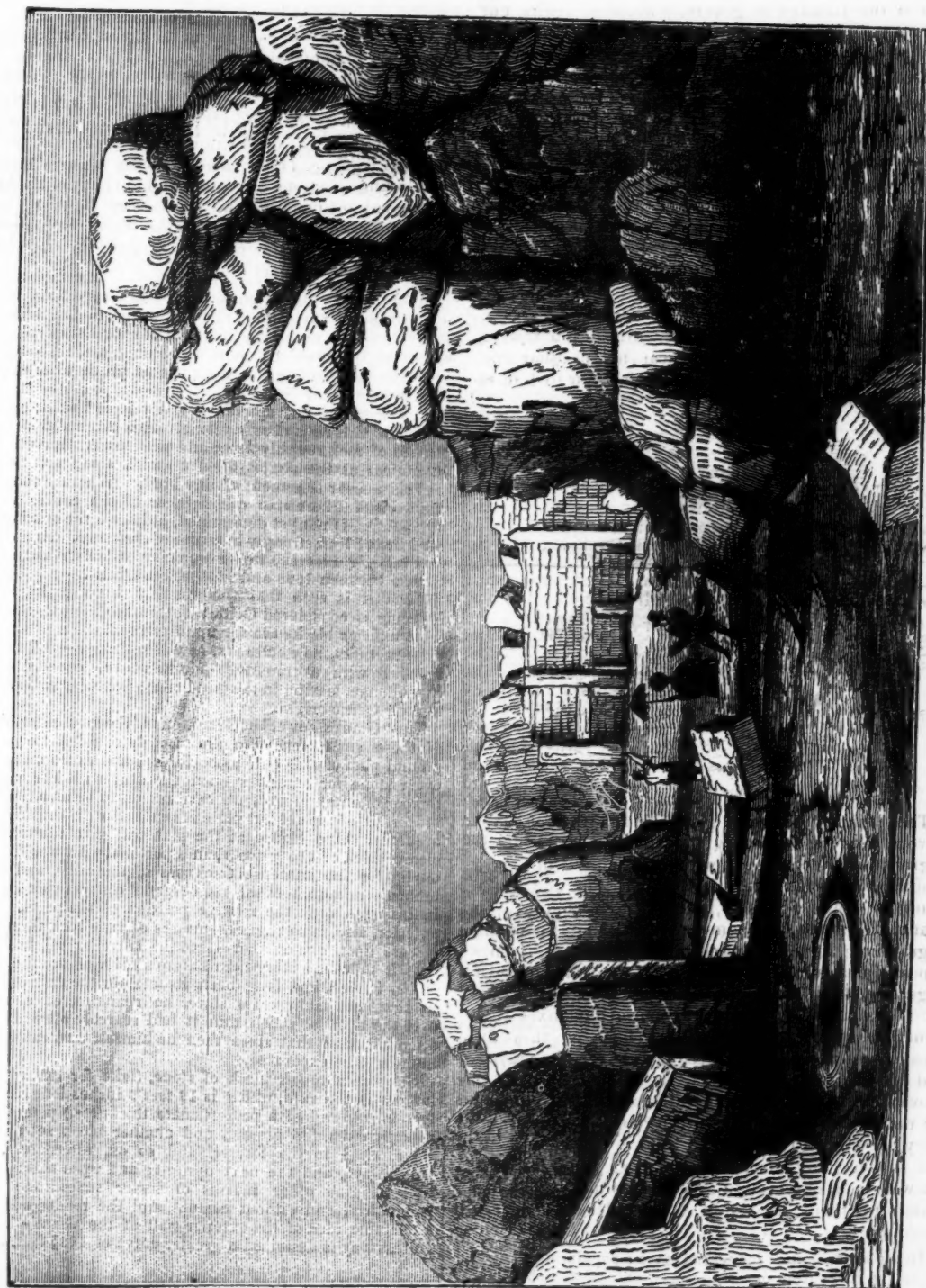
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Magazine.

DECEMBER, 1840.

PRICE
ONE PENNY



GIANT'S TOWER, GOZO.

SOME ACCOUNT OF MALTA. No. III.

18. ANTIQUITIES.

IN the historical sketch which we gave of Malta, we traced the island through the possession, successively, of the Tyrians, Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, Arabs, Normans, Knights of St. John, French, and English. Each of them held the island during a considerable period, with the exception of the French, and left behind them traces of their several languages, habits, architecture, &c. The language of the Maltese is an oral one,—that is, spoken only, and not written in permanent characters,—and it has consequently possessed no means of recording its own changes. The habits of a people are as transient, but the architecture, the public and private buildings, coins, domestic hardware, funeral memorials, &c., are less destructible; these remain to tell their tale to after ages, and are to us the most living history of the past. Stemming the stream of time, let us try to reach records of Maltese history that are not to be found in the pages of ancient chroniclers.

The good Queen Dowager of England is now building a Protestant church at Valetta; the British parliament erected a fine hospital on Bighi Point; these and other works will record to future ages the dominion of the English nation over Malta. The power of the French was too limited in point of time, and we may justly add, too unprincipled, to leave any record but that of ruin. The stupendous fortifications of Valetta; the Cottonera; the Aqueduct; the domestic palaces, which it is sad to see tenanted only by impoverished, and often noble families; the mosaic church of St. John;—these are the proper monuments of the Knights.

The one Norman church that remained to tell of the sway of Roger, the conqueror of Sicily, was destroyed in 1692; but there still exist many remarkable relics of early Christian art of the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, during which period these islands were attached to Sicily. Giuseppe Hyzler, a Maltese artist of great talent, has lately made 300 finished drawings of the most valuable of these works, which are, for the most part, wholly unknown to Europe. Mr. Hyzler enumerates,

Firstly, Paintings in fresco, which adorn the wall of the crypts, or subterranean chapels which served as places of worship to the early Christians. The crypt of St. Agatha, the patroness of Malta, is hewn in the living rock, and the walls were decorated with twenty-four figures nearly as large as life. Of these, some are almost entirely effaced by damp, or crumbling of the rock; of others, enough remains to show the inimitable grace, and purity of design and expression, which characterize the early specimens of the Tuscan school of painting. The colouring (we are quoting from Mr. Hyzler), where not corroded, is as gorgeous and harmonious as a Venetian picture, and the fresco, for hardness and polish of surface, equal to the most celebrated of Italy.

Secondly, There are paintings on wood, cotemporaneous with the frescos. There are several curious specimens of the Byzantine school; we may particularly mention the picture of St. Paul in the cathedral at Città Vecchia, the drapery of which, in conformity with a practice introduced at a later age of Byzantine art, is covered with massive silver in relief, the lines of the folds exactly corresponding with those of the painting beneath.

Thirdly, Tarsia, or inlaid wood. This art was carried to perfection by the great masters of Italy in the fifteenth century, and a few of the most admirable productions now remain. They were the first to yield to the desolating effects of war, or to the accidents of fire. The ground is composed of the *noce*, or black walnut wood of Sicily. We have already spoken of a fine specimen of this work in the cathedral of Città Vecchia.

Mr. Hyzler's labours prove the remarkable fact, that painting was cultivated in the island of Malta at the same time that it gave signs of revival in Italy, and that it continued to advance with equal strides so long as circumstances permitted.

We know of no Arabian or Gothic traces to detain us, unless we except the sepulchral grottoes in the Benjemna mountains; but not having visited these, we cannot give

any opinion as to the period at which they were excavated. The catacombs of Città Vecchia also belong to a doubtful era. They are hewn out of the solid rock, and contain a labyrinth of galleries which are said to extend several miles in length. We traversed them for a very considerable distance, but were constantly impeded in our progress by walls abruptly built up to prevent, so our guides informed us, the curious traveller losing his way amidst the intricate passages. We saw reason to believe that these catacombs had been used as a place of refuge for the living, at a period doubtless subsequent to the age when they offered an asylum for the dead.

Fragments of Roman marbles and coins are frequently found. In a former Supplement we mentioned that a coin, bearing the female figure of Britannia, which had been struck for the Roman colony of Britain, was found in a sepulchral urn at Gozo.

The Carthaginian and Tyrian periods of Maltese history are associated with the foundation of the old city of Rabbato in Gozo, and of Città Vecchia in Malta,—but from whom did the Tyrians, the first recorded possessors of Malta, wrest these islands? Were they then for the first time peopled? or did the Celts live there before that era? The Celts are the most ancient inhabitants that can be traced in Western Europe. It is to them that we refer the oldest ruins that exist in Britain; and if we could find remains in Malta or Gozo similar to the Celtic or Druidical erections that are extant in our own country, we should be fully justified in referring them to this primeval family of Europe.

The most ancient specimens of Cyclopean* walling to be found in Greece is near Mycenæ. It is composed of huge masses of rock roughly hewn and piled together, with the interstices at the angles filled up with small stones, but without mortar or cement of any kind. Whether this was the work of Phœnician colonists, or of the earlier Celtic inhabitants, is not yet determined, although the opinions of the learned lean strongly in favour of the latter. According to Professor Heeren, the Phœnician colonists arrived in Greece between 1600 and 1400 before Christ.

Thus it is seen that the roughly hewn rockwork of Mycenæ is considered Celtic; but, in the Maltese islands, huge unheven blocks are set up after the fashion of Druidical structures, now endways, now lengthways—and in one instance with a transverse block above, exactly as at Stonehenge, leaving in the mind of the beholder no doubt as to their Celtic origin.

The "Giant's Tower" at Gozo is one of the most remarkable of these structures. We are happily enabled to give a ground plan of this curious enclosure, and as we measured every stone for ourselves upon the spot with the patient temper of an antiquary, we have reason to believe that the proportion of the several parts is retained with considerable accuracy. One glance at the plan will give the reader a clearer idea of the place than a personal visit would without it, for the immense thickness of the walls, and their broken condition, prevent the observer connecting together in his own mind the relative position of the parts. The exterior, also, is so rugged—masses of rude rock thrown as it were upon one another—that the traveller might easily pass it by as no other than nature's order of architecture. Such, indeed, had long been its fate, for the resident told us that, not many years since, he remembered shooting over the spot, at which time it had scarcely attracted any attention, and that since then he himself had caused the interior to be excavated.

Suppose a rough block of stone, (take for example the largest in the ruin, which is 19 feet 9 inches long, and 10 feet broad, and of a proportionate thickness,) placed horizontally upon the ground, and another block set up endways, close to the former, and so on, alternately, one lengthways, and the next upright; and upon this foundation imagine other masses of lesser magnitude piled irregularly, and without cement, and the reader will have a tolerable idea of the exterior wall of the Giant's Tower. In this way is described a greater curve of 196½ feet, and a

* So called because supposed to belong to the fabulous age of the Cyclopes, which were imaginary one-eyed and monstrous giants.

lesser curve of 136 feet 5 inches, and an irregular frontage of 118 feet 7 inches,—making altogether a circumference of 451½ feet. In the frontage are two entrances, each leading into two enclosures, the arrangement and relative size and form of which will be immediately understood by reference to the plan.

The enclosures are small compared with the extent of the external walls, the intermediate space being filled up with rubbish, and forming one solid wall of amazing strength. It would seem that resistance from without had been far more an object with the builders than what we might naturally suppose necessary for the celebration of religious rites within, the purpose for which tradition says the place was used. It is said that the sea at one time came much nearer to it than at present, and that people landed here to worship. Names have been given to different parts that follow out the same idea; besides the recesses called altars, a slightly concave surface in the pavement of the largest enclosure is pointed out as the spot where burnt sacrifices were offered. On the other hand, the rock-like strength of the external walls; the narrow entrances, on the sides of which are large holes, in one instance a foot in diameter, for bars or chains for the purpose of securing the passage; and the very name of the Giant's Tower, would all seem to denote a place of refuge;—and such indeed might have been the double end of the religious temples of the earlier ages; the outward security offered by a building made with hands, might have been the type of future peace, the promise of their faith.

The external walls of the Giant's Tower, together with a circular enclosure near to the same spot, as well as some ruins upon the south coast of Malta, similar to those at Gozo, we refer with confidence to the Celtic era of Maltese history, previous both to the Tyrian and Carthaginian; but there are certain portions of the Giant's Tower which we cannot but consider as additions made at a later age. The doorways, the altars so called, a portion of the internal walls, as well as the pavements, are composed of stones neatly hewn, and belong altogether to a later period. In the largest enclosure, which is 74 feet in length, and of which we have given a sketch which we took on the spot, is pointed out a bas-relief, said to represent a dog-fish; and in the adjoining compartment there is an elegant scroll, sculptured in a masterly manner upon the surface of some hewn stones. No coins have been found in these excavations.

We commenced our history with the earliest written records of Malta, and brought it down to our own times: we then retraced our steps backwards to a still earlier period, taking the existing relics of antiquity as our guide: turning from the past to the present, let us now regard the natural and artificial products of the islands, the character and habits of the natives, and their commercial resources.

19. NATURAL HISTORY.

Without hedges, and with but few trees, and these only of a shrubby size, the eye of an Englishman at first sadly misses his green fields and lofty forest trees; but after a short residence upon the island, the wild carob-tree, the paper, and common, mulberry-tree, the Indian and Asiatic fig, the cotton-plant, canes and palms, groves of orange, lemon, and olive trees;—these and many others, by their matchless luxuriance of fruit and flower, and by contrast with the burning soil out of which they spring, dispossess from the chief place in the observer's mind the unvaried and monotonous garb of green that clothes the lowland landscapes of more temperate climes.

There are no trees of large size, because the soil is not of sufficient depth to afford either nourishment enough or anchorage against the winds, that blow here sometimes with the fury of a hurricane. There is no general verdure to comfort the eye, except in winter and spring, because the temperature which ripens tropical fruits is intolerable to the vegetation of European plants. These two facts stated and accounted for, we have said all that can be brought to detract from the capabilities and beauty of the Maltese country. On the other hand, the winter at Malta is like an English spring, and the spring is the parallel of our summer, but the summer and autumn are altogether African and Asiatic. The unbroken weather seems indeed more like one "long bright golden day," than the uncertain season which we call summer.

A day of March at Malta has thus been described, and will prove that this spot is not destitute of beauty that is familiar to us here in our daily paths. "Now the air is

charged with perfumes, above all with that of the intoxicating orange-flower; the May, which in England hardly makes good its name, is shedding its white blossoms and losing its fresh odour: violets are gone; roses, carnations, jessamine, honeysuckles, stocks, wallflowers are in full beauty. The rose of Malta, matchless for its rich and delicate perfume, may be had in favoured spots all the year, but now it is coming out in every garden. Its fragrance is like the most luxurious attar, tempered by the delicate freshness of nature. Every crevice of the rock has nursed some small wild flower, which is now gratefully adorning its sterile cradle. The blue anemone, and the bright scarlet pheasant's-eye, and the tall white lily, and many more, are gone. The small blue iris, which seems to spring out of the bare and solid rock, is in all its beauty; with a hundred more whose names I do not know. The crimson sulla, or clover, the handsomest of crops, is disappearing, field after field, and the gorgeous carpet of crimson and green before another week will be converted into hay. Making hay for the summer, is one of the expressions that startles an English ear*."

The fourth verse of the third chapter of St. Matthew is well illustrated at Malta:—"And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." The capote, as seen upon the quay of Valetta upon the Greek, and occasionally the Maltese, is made, either of goat's hair, or of long white shaggy wool, and seems to answer exactly to our ideas of the raiment of the Baptist; while, as regards his food, wild honey is frequently met with in every part of the Levant, and whether the locusts mentioned in the sacred text were the insects we know by that name, or the fruit of the tree so called, it matters little: both are to be seen at Malta, and the living habits of to-day concur to fill up the picture represented in the above verse, for both the insect and the fruit are still eaten as food.

The locust, the insect, is frequently seen at Malta, but rarely in considerable numbers, and we are not aware that it is ever eaten by the Maltese; but in countries where it is more abundant—in Arabia, for example—it is considered a delicacy. "We saw locusts," says Niebuhr, "put into bags or on strings, in several parts of Arabia. In Barbary they are boiled, and then dried upon the roofs of the houses. The Bedouins of Egypt roast them alive, and devour them with the utmost rapacity." Jackson says they taste like prawns.

But the locust-tree, so common in Malta and Palestine, produces a hard dry seed, which is eaten by the poorest, for want of bread. This fruit is still considered hard fare; and the purport of detailing the food of St. John was evidently to portray his abstinent habits of life; and this indifferent substitute for bread would have been a more natural concomitant with the wild honey than the prawn-like locusts. Such minute questions as these, however, are wholly unworthy of debate upon religious grounds: as historical facts, indeed, it is curious to observe in what respects the habits of past generations were like those of to-day. This gives life to history; but to bring such petty facts as proofs of the authenticity of Scripture is like obtruding tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, mercy, and faith. If these do not satisfy the reader's convictions, insisted upon as they are in the Bible, with a power unknown in any human system of ethics, neither will minute and curious coincidences between the narrative and prevailing customs compel him "to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God."

The caper-plant grows abundantly upon the walls of Valetta. Various medicinal plants are found here; the bitter or squirting cucumber, the squill, the castor-oil plant, &c.; but the most curious vegetable production of these islands is the *Fungus Melitensis*.

Most general readers are acquainted with the gigantic flower discovered by Dr. Arnold in 1818, and named after him and Sir Stamford Raffles, with whom he travelled; but few are aware that the Mediterranean produces a similar plant, small indeed, but belonging to the same natural vegetable division. The Maltese champignon, or mushroom of Malta, the *Fungus Melitensis* of old botanists; and the *Cynomarium coccineum* of modern ones, is no mushroom properly so called, but an extremely curious production, agreeing with the *Rafflesia Arnoldi*, and a few others, in the following particulars.

These plants have no proper roots of their own, and they derive their nourishment from the vegetables on which they

* Quoted from the *Athenium*, No. 550, p. 344.

grow; they have neither stalk, nor stem, nor leaves, but consist simply of flowers, the essential parts of which are the same as in those of the more complex plants; while again, they have no proper seeds, but are multiplied by spores, similar to the spawn of mushrooms; to which, indeed, their general form bears no slight resemblance.

The *Fungus Melitensis* grows upon a shelf of rock lying off the western point of Gozo. The only way this rock can be approached is by a bridge of two ropes, upon which is run a little box just large enough for a man to squat down in. The ropes, we think, are at least a hundred feet above the level of the sea, and more than this in length. The reader will find an apparatus similar to this figured in *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. XII., p. 21. The only object for which travellers pass over this bridge is to see the curious plant above mentioned, but the risk of conveyance amply compensates for any want of interest in the rock itself, or its productions.

The ropes are slack, and consequently curved downwards, and as soon as the little car is let go, it runs with great rapidity down to the centre, where it would else remain, but a native first pulls himself across, attaches a rope to the car itself, and then sends it back for the traveller. We stepped in, squatting down as deeply as the box would let us, grasping firmly two iron rings fixed on the inside for that purpose, and taking an anxious look at the old ropes, which had been in use quite long enough. The rushing of the concern down the inclined plane was the only disagreeable part of the passage; it travels at first too rapidly to enable the squatter to see that all is right, and the creaking of the rusty iron rings upon which it runs, is sufficiently unpleasant.

When we landed, however, not a single mushroom was to be found, the guide assuring us that they were very scarce, but offering to sell us one withered specimen, which had evidently been gathered several days. We were afterwards told that the guide, by dint of clearing one part to which he takes his visitor, and by preserving another part where he warns him that it is dangerous to go, manages to maintain his monopoly, and so increase his perquisites.

The old physicians believed this plant to be a powerful stauncher of blood; in other words, a styptic. In the time of the Knights of Malta, it was held so precious on this account that a guard was set over the rock, and the production itself was sold for its weight in gold, or sent by the grand master to all the friendly sovereigns of Christendom, as one of the most precious offerings he could make. Even our own government allows *5l.* annually for their preservation, and no one is allowed to gather them, nor the guide to sell them. They are preserved ostensibly for the hospitals of Malta and Gozo, to which a few are annually sent, but no use is now made of them as a styptic. The same plant is to be found also in Sardinia.

There are no wild animals in Malta. The only animals for which it has been famous have been the dog, ass, and goat. The asses, especially of Gozo, are remarkably fine, and fetch a high price. The dog, which is now extinct, was a very small animal with long silken hair reaching down to the feet; its face was covered with the same, and its nose turned up, but its rarity compensated, in the eyes of the curious, for its want of beauty.

Wild duck, snipe, fig-peckers, woodcocks, plovers, quails, &c., afford game for the Maltese sportsman. The wild dove, the solitary sparrow, the ant-catcher, larks, and various other kinds of birds, are natives of the island. The end of the month of March is called *il passo*, from the various tribes of migratory birds that then make Malta their resting-place on their way from Africa to Europe. The only reptiles that we remember to have seen are the green and bright-eyed lizard, and a dark-coloured harmless snake.

Of fish, there are the tunny, the red and grey mullet, anchovies, mackerel, white bait, (specifically the same, we are assured by a naturalist travelling for the Surrey Zoological Gardens, as those found in the Thames,) the needle-fish, the shark, &c. &c. Lobsters, crabs, shrimps, oysters, limpets, cockles, sea dates, &c., are met with in the markets.

In the craggy rocks around Malta, are many spacious caves or grottos, into some of which, that are at the sea level, the waves dash in when agitated, and resound from point to point like thunder. The mouths of others are at different heights, and difficult of access; one of the most considerable of these, near Benhisa, the south-east point of Malta, extends more than 200 paces under ground. Water, filtering for ages through the calcareous rocks, has formed

stalactites and stalagmites, in the roofs of all these grottos.

Earthquakes are unknown in Malta in modern times, but at Gozo is one of the most remarkable objects, geologically considered, that it has ever been our fortune to see; a rent, not in the soil only, but in the rock from the sea-shore to the very heart of the island, which seems to have been torn asunder by a force of which we can have no conception from any in constant operation. A view lately given in the *Saturday Magazine**, of a land-slip near Axmouth, Devonshire, gives some idea of this ruin.

20. HEALTH.

The seasons at Malta are regular and well-defined. In the summer the heat is oppressive, and the rain continues with intervals of fine weather, through the months of December, January, and part of February; but both of these periods are free from the diseases that usually prevail in this latitude, for there is no damp and stagnant air, as in woody countries; there is no vegetable putrefaction, nor animal miasm, to contaminate the air, but the porous rock absorbs superfluous moisture, the sea-breezes constantly renew the atmosphere, and the health of the islands is remarkable.

The spring is refreshed by cool winds from the west, but there are no regular sea and land breezes, and the nights of summer are oppressive. Storms are not frequent, although at times thunder-claps burst over Valetta with terrific violence. Some years since, the stone wall of a house was cut, as by a hatchet, from the roof to the foundation, by lightning. In one of the rooms, of which this wall formed the outer side, stood an iron bedstead, in which was a child asleep; the lightning melted one of the iron posts of the couch, close to the infant's head, and yet it slept on, undisturbed by the warring of the elements.

Rain has been known to fall during summer, but it is very rare; the dew, however, is abundant, and it is the habit of the natives to sleep upon the flat roofs of their houses during the hottest season, exposed to this abundant condensation of moisture; and they do this not only with impunity, but enjoy it. A little rain falls in September, but between this and the rainy season is an interval of delicious weather, called the second summer. During the winter, however, rain rarely continues several days without intermission. The winds from the north are then very cutting, but frost and snow are unknown. A few flakes of snow fell in the winter of 1835—6, but none had been seen before for thirty years, and the natives looked upon it as an especial wonder.

As regards temperature, Malta is considered to be the most steady climate in Europe. For the last six years the maximum point of the thermometer within doors has been 90° Fahr., minimum 46°. There is no intermission of vegetation. During the summer months, the thermometer rises from 80° to 90° Fahr.; sinking towards the end of October to 70°, from which time it gradually decreases until January, when it varies from 55° to 50°, below which it rarely falls. At the end of February it again rises to 60°, and continues advancing until the latter end of June, when the summer sets in. This range does not vary much one year from another.

The thermometer, however, is no index whatever to the degree of heat or cold felt by the human body at any place, and at Malta this instrument is more than usually fallacious. The weather-cock is the best animal thermometer at Valetta. In the nights of summer, if the wind falls calm, the heat felt by man is intense, and in a far higher ratio than that indicated by the mercurial thermometer. In the autumn, the south-east wind, or sciroc, brings an overpowering lassitude to man and beast, equally apart from the absolute temperature, which may be, and often is, considerably cooler than at other times, when the air will feel light, thin, and fine, as it always does at Malta, however hot it may be, so that the wind be from the west. Again, the north wind in winter is often very bitter, when the thermometer does not indicate any considerable loss of caloric.

The sciroc wind generally blows from the south-eastern portion of the African desert, and brings with it a considerable degree of moisture. During its continuance the heat is oppressive, the air assumes a hazy appearance, and deposits moisture on the walls, pavement, furniture, books, &c., much to the destruction of the furniture, which warps and cracks as it becomes dry again. The cockpit decks, under a ship's wind sails, are as moist as if steam had been blowing down instead of air. Wine, and malt liquors in cask, become muddy, and remain so if bottled at this time,

* See Vol. XVI. p. 49.

or so long as they are sick. And now, perhaps, the sciroc sinks down,—a calm still more oppressive ensues,—and debility, listlessness, utter lassitude of mind and body, hold an unconquerable spell over the physical and intellectual faculties of man, and his efforts of action are for the time paralyzed. Vegetation is said to be cherished by it.

A westerly wind blows away in half an hour all these feelings of exhaustion, but as the sciroc is the only real drawback to the climate of Malta, how may it be avoided, or its effects be combated? Fortunately, it is only during the month of September that it is frequent; it does not attach or become sensible to English residents till they have been a year or two upon the island, and its effects are quite transient. The island of Gozo offers a healthy refuge during September, and, indeed, at any period of the year, inasmuch as it is cooler, and the sciroc is felt there in a much less degree. To those who cannot leave Valetta, ice or snow, and cold bathing, are necessities of life. The effects of the sciroc are, however, as we said before, altogether transient.

What, then, are the diseases most prevalent at Malta? We put this question to the principal English physician at Valetta, and were told, that except those affections commonly incident to humanity, and especially those attending the early periods of life, as measles, small-pox, &c., there were few or none besides. We put the same question when going round the wards of the hospital at Gozo, and were told, "The only disease we have here is starvation; the poor people come in here in too impoverished a condition to bear solid food, but by feeding them upon broth for a day or two, and then gradually coaxing their stomachs with animal food, they generally leave the hospital fat and well in a few weeks. Low fever, brought on by positive want of food, forms a large majority of all the cases admitted."

It is generally considered that an extreme degree of heat is an element favourable for producing disease of the liver. The statistical report of Captain Tulloch says, however, that the Maltese are remarkably free from disease of that organ; "a sufficient proof," observes the *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, "that heat, for many months little inferior to that of tropical regions, is inadequate to produce a prevalence of liver disease."

Exposure to the mid-day sun, after intemperance, produces *coup de soleil*. The glare of the sun upon the naked rocks is very injurious to the eyes; the natives suffer much from blindness. The significant name of "headach," given there to bad Marsala wine, and that of "kill Johns" to a small hard white apricot, are sufficient cautions to avoid them. These apricots are among the first fruit, are remarkably cheap, and many of the soldiers, it is said, die from their effects. Deformity is rare: hydrophobia is unknown: and horses are not subject either to glanders or grease.

21. QUARANTINE.

Malta suffered considerably from the cholera in 1837, as, indeed, it had been expected, on account of the large and crowded population of Valetta; but it is the plague that has been, and is still considered to be, the enemy, not only of this island, but of every place in the Levant. The lazaret of Malta is the best in the world, and has been considered the barrier against the entrance of this pestilence into Europe. The judgment of Europeans has never, until of late, investigated the real conditions under which plague and other putrid fevers arise; while fear has vitiated the opinions of those who were removed from the source of the inquiry, and prejudiced the observations of those that were on the spot.

This, it may be said, is not the place for a discussion upon the necessity or uselessness of quarantine, but the quarantine laws have separated nation from nation further than the seas which would, but in vain, connect them; and the streams of commerce, of civilization, and of ameliorated happiness, that would have flowed mutually from contiguous continents, have been driven back by the hand of fear; and while it is asserted, on one hand, by the majority of the European physicians that are now practising in the East, that there is no necessity, or use, or prevention, but great abuse and suffering entailed upon health and commerce by these laws, and while many others maintain the contrary opinion, it is at the same time allowed on all hands that the facts are not numerous enough, and the statistical results too few, to enable any one to give an ultimate decision. We think this, or any other place, is fit for any subject near to the welfare of us all, and though no man has power over the

final issue of any struggle between truth and error, yet, by taking the part of one, rather than the other, he may either perpetuate error for a while, or do his best to anticipate the ultimate triumph of truth.

This, we believe, is the best method in any inquiry upon which the minds of men are divided. Let no one blindly repeat his own convictions of general results; let him abstain from the expression of opinions, nor waste his time in tracing, line by line, the impression that this or that fact left upon himself; but let him present the living fact itself to others, and if it be truth, it will have its weight, and if it be not, no sophistry can long bolster it up. Let men confine themselves to the positive history of what has been—to accurate descriptions of things divested, as far as may be, of individual opinions—to facts made common to all by being told in the simple language of all,—in short, to truth, quietly presented to the mind with a most patient philosophy.

We think these observations apply to the question of quarantine as it now stands, and hope that we have prepared the mind of the reader to judge for himself of the few facts we have room to give, to which we ask his attention.

The plague broke out at Malta in 1813, and from April of that year till September, 1814, 4568 persons died, and the island was kept in quarantine for the fourteen following years by France and Italy. To discover how the disease originated, to trace it to its source, so as to be able ever afterwards, by all human means, to prevent the recurrence of like misery, was of course the wish of all.

The opinion then and since held is, that plague was always introduced from the East by an infected person, or by his clothes, or anything, in short, that had been near one ill of plague; that the disease never arose spontaneously at Malta. The account, as told us by an officer of quarantine, on duty when it broke out in 1813, tallies with this opinion. A guardian of the lazaret, it was said, purchased some leather from a vessel from Alexandria, where the plague had been raging, and landed this article before the usual period of purification had expired. "Hence," said he, "arose the pestilence which desolated our island; nay more—Gozo was for a long time free from it, but at last it appeared in a casal near the Giant's Tower. The daughter of a guardian was the first victim, and the father of the girl the second. Cotton is considered to retain the infection of plague longer than most other substances, and when the man was asked, just before his death, if he were aware of having any cotton about him, he confessed, that when employed in the lazaret at Malta, he had stolen jewellery from those dead of the plague; that he had secreted these in a box containing cotton-wool, and had given them to his daughter, who had died."

To complete these apparent links of cause and effect, the quarantine laws have ever since been enforced with extreme care at Malta, and no plague has since appeared outside the lazaret. Having, however, obtained security from pestilence without, who are those devoted individuals who risk their lives in the purification of infectious bales of merchandise, especially of cotton, the most fatal of contagious media? If leather, when carried out of the lazaret, and exposed to the sea-breezes, as it must necessarily have been at Malta, when passing from the quarantine to the commercial harbour, be the carrier of the plague, how much more dangerous must it be to those persons whose anxious duty it is to handle such articles from the first hour of their arrival! If the human beings, clothes, books, and merchandise contained within any lazaret at any given time, would, if suffered to pass, as from a centre to their respective destinations, carry with them pestilence and death, how virulent must be the poison, how concentrated the contagion, when confined within the narrow focus of a single building!

We wish to present facts, and not opinions; but a chain of reasoning is necessary to link these facts together. If certain men, clothes, and merchandise be saturated with the contagious miasm of the plague, it is quite clear that they will be, at least, equally, if not more virulently so, in a crowded lazaret, as when scattered in the open air, through various countries. It is for those who maintain that, when so scattered, they do carry about them the fatal germs of plague, to prove, at least, that they are not without the same when shut up in the prisons of disease. The following facts, detailed by the officers of quarantine at Malta, as answers to certain questions put to them by Mr. Holroyd, go far to prove that such is not the case.

Capt. Bonavia, superintendent of the lazaret at Malta,

has been there since 1832; has never known any persons employed in fumigating letters from infected places to have been attacked with plague; that the persons employed in the smoking-office give the letters a general fumigation before they put themselves in contact with them; has never known guardians employed in handling the baggage of passengers or merchandise to have been attacked with plague; that 15,276 persons have performed quarantine in the lazaret of Malta from 1832 till September 1838; that of these he has never known a case of plague occur, in the lazaret, except those removed from vessels where the disease was raging at the time of their removal.

Giovanni Garein, first clerk to the lazaret, has been employed in the establishment for twenty-nine years; has never known an instance of the persons employed in exposing cotton, wool, feathers, flax, rags, sails, or other suspected articles from infected places, to have been attacked with plague while so employed, excepting upon vessels having the disease on board: that the laundresses handle the dirty linen of the passengers without any precaution previous to immersing it in water; that, of the laundresses thus employed to wash the linen of persons in quarantine, he has never known one to be attacked with plague.

But, upon the other hand, Dr Tweedie, physician to the London Fever Hospital, says, "Every physician, with one exception, (the late Dr. Bateman,) who has been connected with the Fever Hospital (of London), has been attacked with fever during his attendance, and three out of eight physicians have died: that the resident medical officers, matrons, porters, domestic servants, and nurses, have one and all invariably been the subjects of fever; and the laundresses, whose duty it is to wash the patients' clothes, are so invariably and frequently attacked that few women will undertake this duty."

We ask no one to be convinced by these facts, that the London Fever Hospital stands more in need of quarantine than an eastern lazaret; on the contrary, we would advise any reader, to whom this subject is a fresh one, not to pass from one extreme opinion to another, but to collect more facts, and facts only, upon a subject so important to the commerce and health of nations.

22. THE MALTESE PEOPLE.

Trentaise after trentaise repeats that the Maltese are of Arabian origin, but we have seen that Tyrians, Carthaginians, Romans, &c., successively possessed the island, and from this mixed stock, the present race must be derived. The Arabs, it is true, conquered Malta, but they in their turn gave way to others, and left of course a portion of their habits, language, &c., and but a portion, engrafted upon the original inhabitants. It is indeed true, that the Maltese language, as now spoken, greatly resembles the Arabian, and in their wordy quarrels, they, like the Arabs, instead of abusing each other, vent the whole of their scurrility on the fathers, mothers, and other relations of their adversaries; but this only proves that their language and habits were derived from one common source with the Arabian.

The Maltese men are of ordinary stature, strong, robust, and of a brown complexion; the women are rather below the middle size, dark-eyed, delicate, and well made. Both have great mobility of muscle, which well represents their rapidity of mental perception, and of moral sensibility. They are affectionate, sincere, but jealous; sober, industrious, and self-denying. The females are often mothers at thirteen years of age, and have proverbially a numerous progeny.

The costume of the native women is a *faldetta*, or mantle of black silk brought over the head and partly hiding the face, and worn over a black silk shirt, with a white muslin body. This is the universal dress of females in the middle class of life; those higher in condition adopt the English bonnet, &c.; and the poorer persons vary from their countrywomen in variety of colour only. Between the English and Maltese male costume, the difference is confined entirely to the working classes; these wear a mixture of Spanish and Italian garments, a black or coloured cap hanging half-way down the back, a close fitting jacket with innumerable buttons, with a scarf folded round the waist. Their hair is cut close, except upon the temples, where two or three long ringlets are cultivated with extreme care. The most severe punishment to them is to deprive them of this ornament, which is done to criminals in prison. The Maltese women are much prettier than the Gozitans.

The Maltese are very partial to the water. Their boats,

although apparently clumsy, are well adapted for the kind of service for which they are built; they are clean, safe, and commodious, and are rowed with great celerity, the boatmen standing with their faces to the prow, and throwing their whole weight against the oar, which is plunged deep into the water. The natives, both male and female, are expert swimmers.

Their religion is Roman Catholic. The landed property of their church is about one-fourth of the rental of the island, out of which, the bishop is limited to an income of 3000*l.* a year. Until very lately, their language was entirely an oral one, that is, not written, but merely spoken by an unlettered population; it is said to be a *patois* between the Arabic and Italian, and this assertion is true in the main. The Italian was introduced in the twelfth century, when Roger the Norman conquered Sicily and Malta, and has since been employed for all social, judicial, and civil purposes. The higher classes learn the English language as an accomplishment, and the lower, especially the boatmen, as a means of communication with their English employers.

We have noticed the formation of schools in the interior of the island, and the revival of literature consequent upon the freedom of the press. The professors, both in the grammar-school and university, are paid by the government. The knights founded a library in 1650, which is of public access, and consists of 100,000 volumes.

23. RESOURCES.

Malta is a crown colony, and the local government is composed of the acting governor and a council of six. The courts of justice are numerous, and law is dear. The public revenue amounts to about 100,000*l.* a year, of which 7000*l.* is produced by customs, and 23,000*l.* from rentals. Malta has been considered one of the most densely peopled spots on the globe. It is reckoned that there are only nine-tenths of an acre to each human being; and calculating only that part which is cultivated, and all that is susceptible of being so, it is scarcely five-eighths of an acre to each. The same extent of surface which sustains 1216 souls in Malta, supports but 152 souls in England.

In 1837, the census of Malta and Gozo numbered 120,989 souls, of whom 61,159 were males, and 59,830 females. Of the total number, 104,521 were within the island of Malta; and of these, 94,978 were natives, 1468 British residents, 4671 aliens, 2332 British troops, 377 women and others accompanying the troops, and 695 children of these. Of the total number in the Maltese islands, 16,468 lived at Gozo, and of these, 16,455 were natives, and only 13 British residents.

About two-thirds of the land are cultivated, the remaining third being rock destitute of soil. Most of that, indeed, which is under cultivation, has been formed artificially by levelling the rocks and spreading all the soil that could be spared from the valleys upon this foundation. Each of these petty levels are surrounded by stone walls to prevent the soil from being washed away; a succession of these walls, one above another, form terraces, from the valleys upwards. The land is never suffered to rest, and consequently is too precious to lay down for pasture; wheat is sown every alternate year with barley and clover. The seed is put in the ground in November, and the corn is cut in June, and trodden out by oxen. The barley is sown about the same time; much of this is cut green for fodder, and the rest is left till May for seed. After this crop, the fields are sown with cotton, melons, cummin, sesam, &c. Peas, beans, Indian corn, and other leguminous plants are substituted for barley when the land seems to be exhausted. No oats are grown. The land is well irrigated, there being a cistern in almost every field.

Potatoes are fine at Malta, but soon degenerate, so that it is necessary to have recourse every two or three years to fresh tubers from England. The clover, or *sulla*, grows to the height of three or four feet, bears a beautiful crimson flower, and is much esteemed as food for cattle.

Only sufficient corn for three months can be raised in Malta and Gozo, the remainder of the supply being drawn from Sicily and Russia; but a vast variety of fruits and vegetables, which succeed the harvest, compensate, though feebly, for the insufficient supply of grain. There are oranges, melons, particularly the water-melon, figs, the prickly pear, apricots, almonds, grapes, apples, especially at Gozo, and a variety of other European and Eastern fruits. A few sugar-canes are raised at Gozo; the shaddock has lately been introduced into Malta; and we believe that there is no fruit or vegetable, peculiar to any other part of

the globe, that could not be brought to perfection here at one or other season of the year.

The oranges are superior to those of any other country, and form an article of exportation to England. Of these, the egg, the blood and the mandarin are the choicest kinds. The egg-orange is most esteemed at Malta, but the blood in London, on account doubtless of its curious appearance. There are two fables as to the cause of its deep rich carmine colour; one, that it has been obtained by grafting the orange upon a pomegranate stock; the other, that the soil was so thoroughly saturated with the blood of the knights, that the stains have not yet passed away. The true cause is not known. The mandarin, so called from its resemblance to a Chinese head-dress, is of a most exquisite odour, the essential oil of the peel possessing a more powerful aroma than that of any other kind. We have seen this variety in the London market during the last season, under the name of the Tangierene orange, but all attempts to export it from Malta failed.

These islands do not produce more grapes than are sufficient for their own consumption, and but little wine is made, and that at Gozo.

There are two principal kinds of cotton-plant at Malta, one producing a white cotton, and the other a reddish brown nankeen; both are annuals, the seed of which is sown about the end of May, after the corn is off the land, and the pod is gathered in the early part of September. In 1801 the value of the raw cotton produced in these islands amounted to about half a million sterling, and a lucrative exportation of a part of this to Marseilles, and the manufacture of the remainder at home, employed and supported a large proportion of the inhabitants; but this trade has declined from causes too numerous to mention here; and it is the opinion of practical men, that nothing is likely to revive the cotton manufactures of the island. The production of the raw material will still afford employment to the poor.

The goats of Malta are of a superior breed, very large, and produce excellent milk; of which cheese is made. Oxen and horses are brought from Barbary, but asses are bred upon the island, and are remarkably fine. Sheep are very prolific, often producing four, and seldom less than two, lambs at a time. Bees are kept in large quantities, and the honey is liquid, clear and aromatic. The raising of the silk-worm and cochineal insect have both been attempted within the last few years, but neither have as yet succeeded.

There is no public conveyance upon the islands, but communication between Malta and Gozo is kept up almost daily by about a dozen provision-boats, and the produce of the interior is brought by carts to Valetta. The markets are well supplied.

24. CONCLUSION.

Malta is a colony of England, a commercial dépôt for the neighbouring ports, and the centre of steam navigation in the Mediterranean, and yet is impoverished to the last degree. A man may dine, it is said, on fish, flesh, and fowl for a half-penny—the difficulty is to get the half-penny. The penny is divided into twelve parts called grains, and a single grain's worth of cooked meat may be purchased by the poor. Many rarely taste bread, living upon innutritious fruits—and glad to eat of the hard beans of the locust-tree, the veritable "husks" with which the prodigal son would fain have filled himself. We have seen the poor of Città Vecchia devour raw cabbage stalks, and boiled clover is positively the food of some at the most trying seasons of the year.

Willing hearts and able hands want work, and their capabilities are but little known. The Maltese workmanship in gold and silver surpasses, in delicacy of execution, every other in the world. Masterly manipulation in metal, stone, and wood, is an universal talent amongst them. The magnificent mosaic pavement of St. John's church has lately been repaired by men working for a shilling a day. They learnt to cut, inlay, and polish the smallest designs with extreme accuracy. The embroidery of the native women would soon rival that executed by the ladies of the Turkish seraglio. The muscular system of the Maltese is highly developed, not as to mass, but function. There is the same difference between an English and a Maltese artificer, as between the huge dray-horse and the Arab steed—the one possesses strength, solidity, and enduring vigour, and the other surpassing delicacy of motion. Separate paths are open for the industry of both.

The domestic stone palaces of Malta are inhabited by families without resources, who would gladly welcome the English stranger. The hotels of the capital are as cheap as they are luxurious. The climate is more brilliant than that of Greece or Italy, being free from the fatal miasma that are generated in those damp and undrained countries.

The Maltese themselves are attached to the English; their fortifications and their churches, and other works of art, invite the traveller to their island; but let him beware of remaining too long, unless he should be willing to abandon his native country, for Malta and Gozo are still the islands of Calypso, and, after having been garrisoned for three years at Valetta, the English soldier often becomes unnerved, and has been seen to express unmanly regret when ordered to embark for home.

There is a fascination in such a climate which becomes dangerous to moral power and mental action, and to the dormant faculties of an uneducated man the effects are often fatal to future efforts: but, to the over-excited intellect, whose powers have been unduly worked—to the mind morbidly alive to the necessities of labour, and over stimulated, even by its own feverish spirit of emulation, until it is too irritable to cease from work, and yet too exhausted to work with vigour—to such as these Malta would be a most healing climate, and how many minds in this condition are there in highly civilized England.

Go view the palace, rich in tapestried hall,
The Moorish window and the massive wall;
And mark the many loitering in the shade,
In many-coloured garb and guise arrayed;
Long-haired Slavonian skipper with the red
And scanty cap, which ill protects the head;
White-kilted Suliot, gay and gilded Greek;
Grave turbaned Turk, and Moor of swarthy cheek;—
And sainted John's contiguous pile explore,
Gilded altar, gilded beam, and gorgeous floor,
Where you emblazoned in mosaic see
The symbols of a monkish chivalry.

WILLIAM STEWART ROSE.

But we must make an end. The Maltese are free, and fit for freedom, being active in mind and body, glad to work, glad to learn, sober, contented, obedient to the local laws, and attached to the English government which protects them: but they are very poor, yet cheerful midst want and suffering—calling their rock *il fiore del mondo*, the flower of the world, while it denies them bread to eat. Let us hope that their increasing intelligence will develop in them a power to produce important media for successful commerce; and, possessing freedom, and peace, and plenty, that they may bear these blessings with the same moderation with which they have suffered the evils of political despotism and domestic want.

25. POSTSCRIPT.

In a former Supplement we spoke of the commission which was appointed to set at rest the grievances of which the Maltese had complained. By a spirit of economy which corresponded to the expressed desires of the natives, the salaries of many of the English officials were reduced, and in some cases their places were given to the Maltese, and in others they were totally abolished. It is now discovered that these measures have led to the retirement from the island of many Englishmen, who spent not only the proceeds of their offices, but also their private incomes, amongst the people, and that the Maltese who have succeeded them have not the means of circulating the same amount of capital. The former partial evil is now said to have been a universal good; but by these timely concessions the discontented were at least disarmed of every handle for future agitation, and, against any disappointment which arises upon the adaptation of conciliatory measures, we ought to set off all that moral dissatisfaction which the refusal of the same might probably have entailed upon the parent government.

The commercial relations between Malta and Sicily are at present interrupted by a want of right understanding between their respective governments. There is no steam communication, direct or indirect, between these islands; and although several steam-vessels pass close to the port of Messina, none put in for passengers, or even for letters. This broken correspondence is attributed to the court of Naples, as the steam-boats which used to pass between these places were Neapolitan, and have been removed since the English resisted the granting of a monopoly of the whole of the Sicilian sulphur trade to a French merchant. Such a short-sighted policy can only put Malta to a tem-

porary inconvenience, but the recoil upon Sicilian trade will not be transient. By the granting of a monopoly of the sulphur trade to a private individual, against an existing treaty, and to the annihilation of our foreign trade therein, the English were forced back upon their own resources, and discovered in iron pyrites, which are a compound of sulphur with iron, sufficient of the former to supply the whole of our manufactures. Upon being compelled to rescind the monopoly, the king of Naples put a duty upon the exportation of the sulphur, equivalent to the same, and has thereby only further stimulated the efforts of our Cornish miners. The duties also upon the importation of British goods into Sicily are in many cases so excessive as virtually to prohibit an open commerce, while they are the main support to an illicit trade. Almost the entire trade between Malta and Sicily is in fact contraband. Not many weeks since the writer passed from Messina to Valetta, in a Sicilian speronaro, which was laden with English manufactured goods and sugar. These articles were being carried to Malta only to be smuggled back again, in smaller quantities, to various places upon the coast of Sicily. It is highly desirable that all these things should be placed upon a more solid foundation.

The Protestant church, which is being built at Valetta by the munificence of the Queen Dowager, promises to be one of the most ornamental features of that capital. Its chaste proportions and simplicity of detail will render it a graceful Grecian temple, and we shall look forward to the time of its consecration with the hope of being able to give the reader an account of that ceremony, together with a drawing of the finished structure.

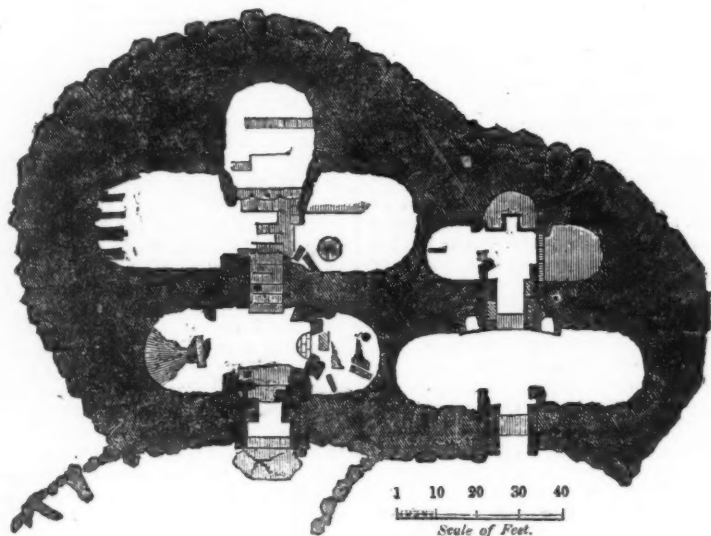
After mentioning a strong sense of retributive justice, and an excessive sordidness of disposition, as the two most unfavourable points in the character of the Maltese, a writer in the *Quarterly Review* thus paints the fairer side of the picture:—

"Into the opposite scale must be cast piety, chastity, sobriety, all the family affections, fidelity, courage, and industry. In Malta the usual effect of a hot climate in disposing to indolence has been counteracted by peculiar circumstances, and the scantiness of the soil has infused into these islanders a portion of energy and activity not to be surpassed by that of the inhabitants of our more northern regions. On horseback they are strong and courageous as ourselves; in

the management of their own vessels they are admirable: in the use of the oar they are undoubtedly our superiors: the inhabitants of the coast may almost be considered as amphibious; and the address of the boys on the *Marina* of La Valetta in recovering a small piece of money from the bottom of the harbour, is among the most striking circumstances which arrest the attention of a stranger. An Englishman sees with wonder the driver of his *calessa*, during the most oppressive days of summer, running by the side of his horse for miles together, and keeping up with him, whatever may be his pace.

"Correspondent in appearance to the vigour with which they are animated, are the figure and limbs of the Maltese. Strongly resembling the remains of Greek sculpture, they afford a singular confirmation of the propriety of that model which the ancients adopted as the scheme of perfection, with respect to strength and beauty, in the human frame."

The same writer gives the following graphic sketch of the capital; with which we must conclude. "Malta, and its sister islands, which are made first, as viewed from the sea, present a heavy, undulating outline; nor is there anything in the whole face of the country which can be called pleasing or picturesque, till you open the harbour of La Valetta. Here, indeed, a scene bursts upon you equally beautiful and imposing. Two considerable inlets, the largest of which forms a most magnificent port, almost insulate the town, situated on a tongue of land, which, rising inland from the sea, exhibits a series of fine buildings towering one above another, and crowned with some singular edifices, detached from the mass, which give a striking finish to the whole. Each side of the harbour is strongly fortified with batteries that appear to grow out of the rock of which they are composed. The south-east side, sufficiently covered with forts and houses, is defended with a triple tier of guns, suggesting an image of power, which works of the first order often fail to convey to an inexperienced eye. The great visible length of the harbour, and its windings, which leave you in suspense as to its real limits, fill the mind with undetermined ideas of extent; and the quantity of shipping of various nations, of different forms, and bearing different flags, together with the crowds upon the *Marina*, gives gaiety and animation to a picture, which can scarce be paralleled in the world."



GROUND PLAN OF GIANT'S TOWER, GOZO.

The part shaded with oblique lines is intended to represent the vast thickness of the walls; that with perpendicular lines, the portions of the pavement which still remain entire; while the four inclosures are left blank. The several proportions may be determined by the scale.

END OF THE SEVENTEENTH VOLUME.

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